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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted jointly by Women in the Building Trades (WIBT), and the Wellesley Center for Research on Women to learn about the experiences of women in the building trades. A questionnaire was distributed at a state conference and mailed to the mailing list of WIBT. All told, 431 questionnaires were distributed, and 131 (30%) were completed and returned, representing about 10% of women in the trades in Massachusetts. All of the women had a high school diploma or equivalent; one in four had some college or business school training; 29% had completed trade school or an apprenticeship, and about as many had a 4-year college degree or more. These women come from all walks of life and are interested in the trades for the same reasons as men--better pay, challenging work, and an opportunity to learn a skill. Almost half came from families whose men were employed in the trades. Many received their training through apprenticeship and on the job. Respondents identified the importance of getting the first job as an important step in entering the trades. Many indicated that their trade meant more independence, financial security, and a greater sense of self-esteem and competence. However, many said that they must continually prove themselves competent and were more likely to experience hostility and harassment. (NLL)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Women in the Trades

By the beginning of this century, jobs in the industrial setting had been designated as male and female. Women were virtually excluded from the trades, as well as other traditionally male jobs, at that time. This changed during World War II, when women were actively recruited to fill traditionally male jobs, but after the war, women were returned to traditionally female jobs. Over the last twenty years, women have again begun to enter the trades, but still remain a minority (O'Farrell, 1987). According to U.S. census data, as of 1980, women made up only 1% to 3% of carpenters, electricians, painters and construction laborers in Massachusetts.

The rate of women's entry into the trades has been slower than that if their entry into other parts of the labor market. While some have argued that this reflects women's lack of interest in the trades, others hold that several barriers serve to keep women out of the trades, including lack of access to training and discrimination in hiring.

Equal employment opportunity for women encompasses not only entry to non-traditional jobs, but also job conditions that encourage retention. While the trades potentially offer women (as they do men) better pay, challenge and a sense of accomplishment, women in the trades may experience sexual harassment and hostility from their co-workers and supervisors, and face other working conditions that contribute to women leaving the trades.

In 1988, Women in the Building Trades (WIBT), a non-profit organization providing training and support for women in the trades in Massachusetts, and the Wellesley Center for Research on Women collaborated on a project to learn more about the experiences of women in the trades.[1] A four-page questionnaire was distributed at a state conference for women in the trades, where it was completed by about 70 women (the majority of the attendees). Additional surveys were mailed to the mailing list of WIBT. All told, 431 questionnaires were distributed, and 131, or 30%, were completed and returned. This is an acceptable response rate for a survey distributed without additional follow-up contacts. These 131 women probably represent fewer than 10% of women in the trades in Massachusetts, but they offer us a detailed look at their experiences -- the barriers they've faced, the nature of their experiences on the job, and the benefits they have found from choosing to work in the trades.

WHO ARE THE WOMEN IN THE TRADES?

Based on our survey, we now know something about women in the trades in Massachusetts. The women who responded range in age from 22 to 54, the average age is 33. All of the women have a high school diploma or G.E.D.; one in four have some college or business schooling after high school, 29% have completed trade school or an apprenticeship program and about as many (30%) have a 4-year college degree or more. Over one in three (38%) of the women are married or living with a partner. Over half (60%) identify themselves as heterosexual, 31% as lesbian, 6% as bisexual, and 4% as other. One in seven of the respondents are women of color (8% Black, 2% Asian, 1% Latina, 4% other), and 85% are white.

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[1] WIBT can be contacted at: Women in the Building Trades, 241 St. Botolph St., Boston, MA 02115.

GETTING STARTED

The women started working in the trades when they were anywhere between 10 years old and 42 years old -- the average age at which they began was 26. Because many of them started in their mid-twenties or later, they had experience in other jobs before the trades. As can be seen in Table 1, one third or more had experience in factory work, office work, the service sector (in restaurants and hotels, or as nurses or child care workers), and in retail sales. Because each woman could have held more than one type of job before entering the trades, the numbers in Table 1 add up to more than 100%.

Table 1: Previous Jobs

5%	The trades were my first job	42%	Worked in retail sales or supermarkets
36%	Factory work	33%	Teaching, nursing, child care, etc.
49%	Office work	52%	Other job
41%	Worked in restaurant/hotel/motel		

Reasons for Entering the Trades

The most common reasons for entering the trades were: "I liked working with my hands", "The chance to learn a skill", "The challenge of the work" and "The money was better than what I could make at other jobs" (see Table 2). Women also became interested in the trades because they wanted to work outside more or to work on their own. For many, having a skill meant that they could get a job anywhere. They also wanted to get away from the office, and did not want to have to dress up for work. And for some, they became interested in the trades because they knew people in the trades.

Table 2: Reasons Became Interested in Trades

62%	The money was better than what I could make at other jobs	64%	The chance to learn a skill
84%	I liked working with my hands	45%	Having a skill means I can get a job anywhere
62%	The challenge of the work	49%	The chance to work outside more
35%	I didn't want to have to dress up for work	31%	The chance to work on my own
24%	I wanted to get out of the office	32%	I knew people in the trades
		31%	Other

Preparation for the Trades

About one in ten respondents feels she knew a lot about different kinds of trades before they started learning their trade; the majority (62%) feel they knew a little and about one in four feels she knew nothing. Many of the women had family members in the trades; these women are more likely to feel that they knew something about the trades before they started learning their trade. Some of the women in the trades

also have, or had, friends (both men and women) or a spouse or partner who is employed in the trades (see Table 3).

Table 3: Role Models

Were any of the following people ever employed in the trades:

20%	Spouse or partner	41%	Men friends
42%	Men in the family	34%	Women friends
5%	Women in the family		

More than half of the women who responded have held apprenticeships, almost three quarters have had on-the-job training. Women were less likely to have received training through vocational education school, technical school or adult ed classes or other courses (see Table 4). Many of the women who checked "other" had participated in the CETA Women in Construction program, which no longer exists.

Table 4: Training

12%	Vocational Ed. School	13%	Technical School
60%	Apprenticeship	19%	Adult Ed Classes, other courses
73%	On-the-job Training	18%	Other

About half of the women had some knowledge of tools and experience with tools, as well as some math skills, when they started their first job in the trades. About two out of three were fairly or very confident that they could do the job when they first began working in the trades (see Table 5).

Table 5: Skills and Confidence When Began Working in the Trades

Skills

60%	knowledge of tools	39%	mechanical aptitude
46%	experience with tools	53%	math
14%	blueprint reading		

Confidence

22%	very confident	19%	only somewhat confident
41%	fairly confident	19%	not confident

One third of the women rate themselves as currently above average in skill level; over half rate themselves as about average. Interestingly, women who now rate themselves as above average in skills are as likely as beginners to say that they had little or no confidence when they first started out (29% said so). In general, women with more years in the trades, and with training other than Adult Ed classes, are more likely to rate themselves as above average in skills (see Table 6).

Table 6: Years in Trade and Current Skill Level

Current Skill Level:	Number of Years in Trade 1 to 2	3 to 5	6 to 26
Beginner	38%	10%	4%
Average	42%	68%	51%
Above Average	21%	23%	44%
Number of women	22	30	70

What Do You Wish You Had Known Before You Started?

The women were asked what they wish they had known before they started. Table 7 shows their responses.

Table 7: What Do You Wish You Had Known Before You Started?

	Number of Women Commenting[1]
More knowledge/experience relevant to own trade	11
More about tools, machines	5
More about other trades	8
More about the union	4
More about harassment	3
More about training opportunities	3
More about hazards and physical demands of trade	3
How important my own attitude was	3
That I could get an earlier start	2
About self-employment	2
What is expected at jobsite, i.e., job, dress	1
How to manage my money	1

[1] This was an open-ended question. Therefore, this table shows the number of women who volunteered related comments.

The most frequent response was that they wish they had more knowledge or experience in their trade; and more knowledge of specific tools and machines. Others would have liked to know more about other trades, so that they could have made different

choices. A few women commented that they would have liked to have known what to expect from their male co-workers and how to deal with harassment -- one women said she wishes she had known at the start "what kinds of harassment was considered 'normal fun' and what was reportable". Other women wish they had known more about the union, training opportunities, the hazards and physical demands of their trade, how to be self-employed, what was expected on the jobsite in terms of the job and dress, and how important their own attitude would be to dealing with difficulties. Two women commented that they wish they had known that they could have gotten an earlier start.

Why This Trade?

When asked which trade they would pick if they had it to do over, most of the women (83%) said they would pick the same trade. Their comments about why they would pick the same trade, as well as the comments of women who would pick another trade, provide some information about the differences between the trades. The most comments were received from electricians and carpenters, followed by painters and laborers. Because only one or two women commented on each of the other trades, these trades are not included here.

The main reasons electricians gave for staying with their trade were the fact that it takes "brain work" and is a "very logical" craft, it offers a variety of tasks and it involves less physical labor than other trades. Other reasons include: a strong union, the fact that it is a licensed trade, the consistent demand for electricians, the "great women" (as one respondent put it), not having to work outside as much and the fact that it is a comparatively healthy trade. For women who would rather be electricians than their current trade, the main draw is the fact that it is a trade that is useful at home. These women also mentioned some of the same reasons electricians gave for liking their trade.

The main reasons carpenters gave for being satisfied with their trade were the sense of pride they feel when seeing something they've built, and the enjoyment that comes from working with wood. Carpenters also mentioned the variety and creativity of their trade. One woman wishes she had become a carpenter because it is also a trade that is useful at home.

Painters, like carpenters and electricians, said they like their trade. One woman commented that painting is easy to get a start in, because of the low overhead. However, several painters would rather not be painters because they are exposed to hazardous fumes. Laborers would stay with their trade because it is physical, involves working outdoors and is good exercise. Another woman commented that she chose to become a laborer because she didn't want a long apprenticeship. Women also noted, however, that being a laborer doesn't pay as well as the other trades and involves less skill.

WORKING CONDITIONS

The women who responded have an average of 7 years experience in the trades, ranging from less than 1 year to 26 years experience. Almost three out of four (74%) are union employees; 16% are non-union employees and 10% are self-employed. Most of the women (44%) usually work with one other person, 27% work with a crew and 30%

usually work alone. Of those who work alone, 21% are self-employed. For the women who work on jobs with other workers, they are often the only woman. Almost half (47%) report that they currently are the only woman on their job site; 72% are the only woman in their trade on their job site; 80% are the only woman on their crew.

The respondents were asked how concerned they were about various aspects of their jobs; they answered on a four-point scale from "not at all concerned" to "very concerned". Table 8 shows the proportion of women who are considerably or very concerned, and offers, as a comparison, the responses of 400 women working in traditionally female occupations -- social work and licensed practical nursing -- in the Boston area to similar questions.[1] As we can see, women in the trades are, for the most part, only somewhat, if at all concerned about the job's dullness, the job's not using their skills, or limited opportunities for advancement. In contrast, many social workers and LPNs are concerned about their lack of advancement opportunities and about the demands of their jobs. Women in the trades are less likely to have jobs that require that they work under pressure. However, women in the trades are more likely to be concerned about exposure to injury and are more likely to be concerned about discrimination on the basis of gender or race/ethnicity.

Table 8: Job Concerns

Proportion of women who are considerably or very concerned about the following conditions at work:

	Tradeswomen	Social workers and nurses
The job's dullness	11%	13%
Having little chance for advancement	17%	40%
The job's not using your skills	19%	24%
Being exposed to illness or injury	41%	17%
Having to work under pressure	25%	41% [1]
Facing discrimination because of your race/ethnic background[2]	10%	4%
Facing discrimination because you are a woman	23%	7%
The job's being physically strenuous	26%	16%
Having to deal with difficult co-workers	18%	not asked

[1] The social workers and nurses were asked how concerned they were about "having too much to do". In another question, they were asked how often they have to work under pressure -- 67% said they work under pressure often or always.
[2] Both groups of women included about 15% women of color.

[1] For more about this study of social workers and nurses, see Nancy L. Marshall, Rosalind C. Barnett, Grace K. Baruch, Joseph H. Pleck, "More Than a Job: Women and Stress in Caregiving Occupations", under review.

Treatment by Co-workers and Management

Because women working in the trades are often the only woman on the job, they are particularly likely to be treated with hostility or condescension or harassed by their male co-workers and supervisors.

As can be seen in Table 9, half of the women reported that management are helpful or willing to help them learn, and about two-thirds reported that co-workers are helpful or willing to help them learn. Women who do not work alone, but work with a partner or crew, are more likely to have reported such attitudes from management and co-workers, possibly because the men have an opportunity to be helpful as they work with the women. More importantly, women who are not the only woman in their trade on their job site or not the only woman on their crew are more likely to have reported that co-workers are helpful. This may be because men are more helpful when there is more than one woman, or because female co-workers are more helpful.

Table 9: Attitudes of Management and Co-workers Towards Respondents

	Proportion of Women Reporting	
	Management	Co-workers
Helpful	55%	70%
Willing to help you learn	50%	64%
Protective	38%	45%
Condescending	24%	15%
Hostile	8%	15%

While the women generally agreed that the men they work with are helpful, some commented that it only takes one or two on the job who are hostile or condescending to make the job unpleasant. More than one in seven women reported that co-workers are hostile or condescending; 8% reported that management is hostile and one in four reported that management is condescending. Hostility and condescension are strongest when a woman is the only women in her trade on the job site or the only woman on the crew (see Table 10).

Table 10: Isolation and Hostility

	Management is:		Co-workers are:	
	Hostile	Condescending	Hostile	Condescending
Only woman in trade	12%	27%	14%	19%
Other women in trade	0	17%	17%	3%
Only woman on crew	11%	26%	17%	17%
Other women on crew	0	14%	9%	5%

Over a third of women reported that management is protective; almost one half reported that co-workers are protective. Women who are the only woman in their trade on their job site or the only woman on their crew are more likely to have reported that co-workers are protective.

Women in the trades are frequently reminded that they are working in a man's domain. As one woman commented, "every ironworker shack and trailer I've ever been in has a poster of a scantily clad woman 'selling' tools - you know, holding a skillsaw and wearing a bathing suit!" This woman did not consider that to be harassment since it was not directed at her personally. In fact, women in the trades seem to take such facts of the jobsite in stride, although some feel it is a barrier to women entering and staying in the trades. However, sexual harassment -- uninvited, deliberate sexual behavior directed at an individual woman, is also common. Almost every women working in the trades has experienced uninvited sexually suggestive comments, looks or gestures (see Table 11). One woman said that her first day on the job a co-worker invited her for a beer after work, and when she refused, accused her of not liking men and made several vulgar sexual comments to her. Such treatment is common; one in four women work in an environment where uninvited sexually suggestive comments, looks or gestures from co-workers are a frequent occurrence. Such comments are so pervasive that the only factor related to a woman's likelihood of receiving sexually suggestive comments is opportunity -- women who work with a partner or crew, rather than alone, are more likely to receive uninvited comments. The presence of other women on the crew or in the same trade on the jobsite does not seem to influence the frequency of this form of sexual harassment.

Almost half of all women in the trades have experienced uninvited, deliberate touching from a co-worker. Approximately one in twenty women are subjected on a regular basis to pressure for sexual favors, deliberate uninvited touching or uninvited notes or pictures of a sexual nature.

Table 11: Sexual Harassment

	Ever Experienced		More than Once/Month	
	Supervisor	Co-worker	Supervisor	Co-worker
Uninvited sexually suggestive looks, comments, joking or gestures	43%	72%	18%	28%
Uninvited pressure for sexual favors	21%	38%	6%	3%
Uninvited deliberate touching, leaning over or pinching	21%	48%	3%	8%
Uninvited notes, letters, pictures, posters, or objects of a sexual nature	14%	36%	4%	7%

Women who are the only woman on the crew or in their trade on the job site are more likely to experience uninvited touching from co-workers. In addition, women who work with only one other person are more likely to experience uninvited touching from a

co-worker. Both isolation -- being the only woman -- and opportunity for the harasser -- working with a partner with no one else around -- increase the likelihood that a woman will be sexually harassed by a co-worker (see Table 12).

Table 12: Isolation and Harassment

	Ever Experienced Uninvited Deliberate Touching, Leaning Over or Pinching By a Co-worker
Only woman on crew	54%
Other women on crew	25%
Only woman in trade on job site	55%
Other women in trade on job site	36%
Works with a partner	60%
Works with a crew	37%

EARNINGS

Four out of five of the women who completed the survey reported that they now earn more than they did before they worked in the trades (when they worked in retail sales, restaurants, hotels, offices, factories, and as teachers or nurses or in other traditionally female occupations). While women who have been in the trades for only a year or two often earn less than in other jobs, after the first two years 83% to 90% of women earn more than they did before (see Table 13).

Table 13: Earnings

Earnings now compared to before working in the trades	Number of Years in the Trades			
	1 or 2	3 to 5	6 to 10	more than 10
Earn less	50%	10%	4%	0%
Earn about the same	9%	7%	6%	11%
Earn more	41%	83%	90%	89%

For the women who are earning more now, this increased income has meant that they are more independent because they have their own money, they are not as worried about paying their bills, and they are able to afford things, like a care or a house, or a better life for their children. Women also commented that their increased earnings provided them with a sense of security and an opportunity to travel or save money. The financial security also means, for about a quarter of the women with children, that they are more patient with their children (see Table 14). In addition, several women pointed out that increased money also means that they feel better about themselves, are less likely to feel depressed, and feel more self-confident.

Table 14: Effect of Increased Earnings

	Proportion who report:
I'm more independent because I make my own money	60%
I'm not as worried about paying my bills	68%
I could afford to buy a car or a house	68%
I can buy nice things for myself	66%
I can buy nice things for others	62%
I can provide a better life for my children	58% *
I have more patience with my children	23% *
Other	35%

* Percent of mothers who reported this

IMPACT OF WORKING IN THE TRADES

Women reported that working in the trades has affected their lives in several ways. About 3 out of 4 reported that working in the trades has made them feel more competent; 2 out of 3 reported that they feel more sure that they can handle whatever comes their way and that they feel better about themselves. A little more than half find that working in the trades means they can do things around the house that used to intimidate them and that they are more willing to take risks. (The fact that other women did not report this effect doesn't necessarily mean that they don't feel they can do things around the house or take risks, since the trades may attract women who already feel comfortable with risk-taking and doing things around the house.) On the negative side, almost 1 out of 3 women reported that it is hard being the only woman on the job. One in eight feels frustrated with how slowly she gets hands-on training, and feels more defensive or angry than she used to -- a reaction that some women have reported to be a result of the hostility and harassment they have experienced on the job.

Table 15: Impact of Working in the Trades

	Percent Reporting
I feel more competent	74%
I feel more sure that I can handle whatever comes my way	66%
I feel better about myself	63%
I can do things around the house that used to intimidate me	54%
I'm more willing to take risks	58%
It's hard being the only woman on the job	28%
I feel frustrated with how slowly I get hands on training	13%
I feel more defensive or angry than I used to	13%

SUPPORT FOR WOMEN WORKING IN THE TRADES

Support comes in many forms -- including child care for women with children, supportive attitudes of family and friends, belonging to a trade support group and tradeswomen organizations.

Of the 27 women with young children, one third (33%) rely on a neighbor, friend or family day care provider for child care, almost one fifth (19%) rely on a relative, and over one fifth (22%) rely on their partner or spouse to care for their children while they are at work. Fifteen percent (15%) use a day care center, nursery school or after school program and 11% rely on an older sibling or a teenager for child care.

Most of the women reported that their partner or spouse is very supportive of their working in the trades. Of the 40 women with children, including older children, almost 3 out of 4 reported that their children are very supportive of their working in the trades. Similarly, friends tend to be very supportive of the respondents. However, family members are often only moderately supportive, and about 1 in 10 are not at all supportive.

More than half of the women (61%) belong to a trade support group and 92% favor a statewide tradeswomen organization.

Table 16: Support from Family and Friends

	Very Supportive	Somewhat Supportive	Not Supportive
Partner or Spouse	95%	5%	0%
Children	73%	25%	3%
Mother	50%	36%	14%
Father	51%	39%	10%
Other Family	56%	38%	6%
Friends	87%	12%	1%

UNION MEMBERSHIP

Three out of four women responding to the survey belong to a union, 16% are non-union employees and 10% are self-employed. However, union membership varies from trade to trade. For example, all laborers are unionized, as are 82% of electricians. However, only 64% of painters and 59% of carpenters are unionized. In addition, painters are much more likely to be self-employed than are other trades (29% are self-employed).

The women were asked why they were, or were not, union members. The main reasons for being members of the union are the pay and the training that is available and the level of skills that can be acquired. As one woman noted: "the most skilled workers are union". Other important reasons for being a union member are a belief in unions

and the importance of worker solidarity, and because of the protection and improved working conditions that unions offer, benefits, the job security and greater opportunity for women (see Table 17).

Table 17: Reasons for Joining a Union[1]

Better Pay	33	More Opportunity for Women	14
Training/Skills	27	Safety	8
Believe in Unions	19	The Job was Union, Membership was Mandatory	8
Protection, Working Conditions	18	To Get a Job	6
Benefits	17	Advise of family, friends, teachers	5
Job Security	15		
Quality of the work	3		

[1] This was an open-ended question. Therefore, this table shows the number of women who volunteered related comments.

The main reasons given for being non-union are the lack of unions in their trade or geographic area, and the fact that union jobs are not the kind of work they wanted -- for example, carpenters who prefer residential work, which is non-union, to large commercial projects. Several women also said they are non-union because of the level of male hostility and harassment on union jobsites. Other reasons women gave included: difficulty getting into the union, its easier to get started non-union, their first job was non-union, they were working part-time, not liking union politics and not liking how sexist unions can be (see Table 18).

Table 18: Reasons for Not Joining a Union[1]

Not the Kind of Work I Want	7	No Union in my Trade, Area	8
Male Hostility, Harassment	7	Couldn't Get in the Union	2
How Sexist Union can be	1	Easier to Get Started	2
First Job was Non-Union	2	Started Part-time when child was Small	1
No Work for Union	1		
Don't Like Union Politics	1		

[1] This was an open-ended question. Therefore, this table shows the number of women who volunteered related comments.

One woman said she's a union member "because I worked non-union first. The pay wasn't good. There was too much harassment on the job, no chance for advancement, and discrimination. In the union, there's good pay, men work with women often so its no big deal being a woman on the job. I've been a foreman on a job so advancement is possible". Another woman said: "I'm a union member currently working non-union because I can no longer endure the emotional and spiritual abuse I experienced working on union jobs. I've taken a big paycut to work in a supportive and caring environment". These comments raise the question of whether or not there is more hostility and harassment at union jobsites than at non-union jobsites. In fact,

women who are union members are no more or less likely than non-union women to report that their co-workers and management have a hostile attitude, nor is there a difference in the proportion of union and non-union women who have ever received sexually suggestive comments from supervisors or co-workers. (Hostility is infrequently reported, and sexual comments are frequent for both union and non-union sites). However, union women who are the only woman on their crew are more likely than non-union women (regardless of whether they are the only woman on the crew), and more likely than union women who work with other women, to have been deliberately touched or pinched by a co-worker. In fact, union women who work on a crew that includes other women are no more likely to report uninvited deliberate touching than are non-union women.

OBSTACLES AND BARRIERS

The women were asked what had surprised them about the trades, and what obstacles and barriers they thought women experience in the trades. Some of the surprises would probably be shared by men who did not know much about the trades before beginning -- how many tools are needed and how much skill goes into doing a trade well. Other surprises may be more unique to women. Almost one in five was surprised by how physically hard the work is -- and by their ability to do it. Some of the most commonly reported surprises were those associated with being a woman working in a male field -- including how conspicuous they are as women, what its like to work with all men, the fact that co-workers' wives could be jealous, and by people gossiping about them (see Table 19). As one woman commented "Men are major gossips". Another woman said she was surprised by "how protective and gossipy guys are, how really sensitive and caring most can be". In fact, the women disagreed on what it was about working with men that surprised them -- for some it was the fact that they could get along well, for others it was the antagonism and insecurity of the men.

Table 19: What Surprised You About the Trades?

	Percent Reporting
How physically hard the work is	17%
The fact that you weren't too weak to do the job	17%
How many tools you would need	46%
How much skill goes into doing a trade well	43%
How conspicuous you are as a woman	45%
Jealous wives of co-workers	25%
People gossiping about you	32%
What its like to work with all men	34%
Other	26%

The respondents were asked about various obstacles and barriers experienced by women in the trades. As Table 20 shows, a majority of women felt that a lack of background for the trades compared to men, getting accepted by co-workers, and

getting hired for that first job are obstacles for women. One woman commented that "working hard to earn respect usually works, but its tough having to prove yourself over and over again". Another woman commented: "As a journeywoman, I usually get odd looks when I first go on a jobsite, but am accepted once I show I am able and willing to do the work". A third woman, a skilled electrician, said that "constant pressure from peers eventually erodes confidence". One woman summed it up:

> I think men are just starting to become comfortable working with women in the trades because they have experienced working with competent professional women, yet its difficult for some to break away from the old [stereotypes] of brainless incapable women. Lets face it - the potential for danger is almost constant if the confidence isn't there. They are unwilling to train you and take a risk -- they'd much rather send you on errands and cleaning. It's difficult to break through this at each new job unless you have a boss who has worked previously with a successful woman in the trades.

Table 20: Obstacles and Barriers

	Percent Reporting
Background	
Lack of background for the trades compared to men	75%
Having trouble picturing yourself working in the trades	28%
Entry	
Getting hired for that first job	56%
Getting into the union	37%
Treatment on the Job	
Getting accepted by your co-workers	74%
Discrimination because of color	32%
No "old girls network"	44%
Lack of Support	
Lack of help or support from family or friends	32%
Jealousy from family and friends (I never see you, you're not around when I need you)	13%
Other	28%

In addition, some of the women reported that difficulty getting into the union, discrimination because of color, lack of an "old girls network" to provide access to jobs, lack of support from family and friends, and "having trouble picturing yourself working in the trades" are barriers for women. One woman said that when she interviewed for her union, she was asked questions that she felt were discriminatory -- "Are you married? What does your husband think of this? Won't you get pregnant?". She noted "and this local already lost a discrimination lawsuit -- imagine the others!" While lack of background in the use of tools and mathematical skills is an obstacle, several women pointed out that the fact that girls do not

learn that they can seriously consider entering the trades is also a barrier to women's involvement in the trades.

The women also commented on some of the subtle barriers -- being ignored and marginalized, the boss giving instructions to the woman's male partner. Other obstacles that women noted: making more money than one's partner, being isolated from other women, lack of day care and lack of support from the union for family obligations like day care and sick leave, and not being able to find a clean bathroom on site.

CONCLUSION

Women who enter the trades come from all walks of life. They are interested in the trades for the same reasons men are -- the trades provide better pay, challenging work, and an opportunity to work with one's hands and to learn a skill.

Almost half of the women came from families whose men were employed in the trades. Many of the women received their training for the trades through apprenticeships and on-the-job training. Such training is important to the development of skills necessary to the trades. While many of the women reported that women's lack of background in the trades is a barrier, by the time they took their first job the majority had some knowledge of tools and math. Another important step in entering the trades is getting that first job -- which a majority of women reported is still a major obstacle for women.

Women who have been working in the trades for a few years are now competent, self-confident tradeswomen. They have found that the trades <u>do</u> pay better than their other jobs and provide a sense of challenge and accomplishment. Many of the women who answered the survey are enthusiastic about their trade. Working in the trades has meant more independence, financial security and a greater sense of self-esteem and competence.

But women remain a minority in the trades, and this takes its toll. Women often find that they must prove themselves again and again on each new job. For one in three women, it is hard being the only woman on the job. Women who are isolated on the job, as the only woman on the crew, or working with just one other co-worker, are more likely to experience hostility and harassment. This reality discourages some women from entering the trades, and others from staying in the trades. Hopefully, as more women enter the trades, individual women will not have to prove themselves on each job, and will not experience the same levels of hostility and harassment that are currently part of working in the trades.